

## WHAT IT IS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

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"And there they preached the gospel."—*Acts, xiv: 7.*

To preach the gospel by individual and organized effort is the prime duty and professed aim of the Christian church. This sentiment will meet with universal approval from all who claim to be the followers of the Saviour; for differ as they may respecting theological and ecclesiastical words and things, all concur in the admission, that the phraseology of the text sets forth the duty and the aim of the church. It is a part of the universal Christian creed, that Christ came to announce and exemplify the central truth of the gospel; that the Bible, and particularly the New Testament, contains the written record of the gospel; and that the church is a divinely constituted organism to communicate the gospel to the world through her ministry and membership. Ask the Protestant church why it exists, and the answer is returned, That we may proclaim the gospel. Demand the same of the Papal, or of the Greek church, and a similar reply will be given. To this end every clergyman, whether styled priest, or minister, stands in the sacred desk; every Sabbath school teacher instructs his class; every missionary leaves his home and takes up his abode among the heathen; every private disciple directs his life and labors. For this purpose religious

societies exist, voluntary and ecclesiastical ; some to commission and sustain preachers, and others to print and circulate the Bible, religious tracts, and books. All point, as their justification, to the command of Christ given previous to his ascension, and to such examples as those of Paul and Barnabas in the text.

But this universal concord soon breaks into discord, when we go back of the mere phraseology, and inquire what is the gospel ? and what is it to *preach* the gospel ? Instead of one consentaneous reply, there return a thousand harsh and dissonant answers. The Papist, the Greek, the Armenian, has each his most orthodox theory, while the Protestant lifts up the loud voice of protest against them all. They agree that the church has a most important message to deliver, but no two understand the message alike. Nor do we avoid this difficulty in confining our attention to those sects by us denominated evangelical, nor even by limiting our views to those which, at least disagreeing, are most accustomed to act together. Within a few years, theories of preaching and of church action have been advocated by brethren heretofore supposed to harmonize, so contradictory in nature, and so utterly diverse in effect, as to necessitate a discussion of the questions to which I have referred. We find one party accusing the other of not preaching the gospel; and the latter retorting the charge with equal earnestness. Yea, so serious is the practical difference found to be, that a division has been made on the field of benevolent action and within the circle of ecclesiastical fellowship, if not in the spirit of strife and variance, at least for the purpose of independent experiment. There is error and consequent fault somewhere; and to detect it, an examination of fundamental principles becomes necessary.

The English word gospel, derived from the Saxon "god," meaning "good," and "spell," signifying "narration or message," is a perfectly exact rendering of the Greek word *euangēlion*, which likewise means a glad or welcome announcement, and both are used in their respective languages to denote that glorious system of grace and salvation revealed in the Scriptures and centering in the life and death of Jesus Christ, the declaration of which is indeed "glad tidings" to sinful and death-deserving men. Were a benevolent individual to approach a family in the depths of poverty, bringing the relief which their wants required; or, were a friend to enter the cell of a convict condemned to death, holding a pardon in his hand, no phraseology would be more natural, by way of preface, than to say, "I bring you good news." How much more appropriate, then, is the application of such a title to the message which brings the offer of eternal life to those about to perish forever. In this way the entire revelation of duty and privilege, of doctrine and practice, growing out of our relations to God in the work of redemption, is called the gospel. It includes the statement of facts to be received on the testimony of God, and deeds to be done as conditions of acceptance. Its appeal is to man's entire nature, that he may be raised from his fallen condition, and so changed in his interior character and his external relations to the divine government, as to be "made meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Hence, to *preach* the gospel, is so to present it, in its fullness and proportion, that it may have its legitimate effect in enlightening and purifying mankind. This implies the explicit statement, defence, and application of its peculiar doctrines, by which it stands practically and

theoretically distinguished from all other and false religion. The hearer must be made to understand what the gospel is as a revelation from God to man, with its fundamental and far-reaching truths concerning the divine character and government, and human character and deserts, and the glorious and unique plan of redemption through the blood of Christ and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit; and he must be convinced that this message is authentic and may be safely credited, for which purpose proof may be brought from every legitimate and impressive quarter. Moreover, his affections must be stirred, so that he shall feel as well as believe, and under the pressure of conviction and emotion be led also to act. Thus an appeal should be made to fear, to hope, to gratitude, and to a sense of right, with all the power of rhetoric and oratory, of learning and zeal, until sinners are persuaded to abandon their rebellion and seek the favor of God.

The grand aim of the gospel is, to direct our attention to Christ; for herein Christianity differs from all the abortions of philosophy, that it presents us with a personal Saviour, through whom we are to be regenerated, pardoned, sanctified, and made meet for both earth and heaven, instead of delivering us over to a mere code of ethics, on which to waste our weakness by vain attempts at self-reformation. The Bible, instead of meeting us with metaphysical abstractions, or naked maxims of right, or putting us to the work of propitiating God by self-torture or personal merit, hails us with the announcement, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." And for the encouragement of the despairing, it records the experience of Paul as

a testimony to the power of the gospel to perform a moral miracle, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God (has done) sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemning sin in the flesh." This, then, is the essential thing in preaching the gospel: to lift Christ up before a dying world, as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the midst of the expiring Israelites, and bid men believe and live. Therefore, while it is said of Paul and Barnabas in the text, in reference to their labors in and near Lystra and Derbe, that "*there they preached the gospel,*" the same idea is advanced in connection with the labors of Philip by the phrase, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and *preached Christ unto them.*" Here then we find a synonym of the text, by which we learn that every minister, every private Christian, every missionary society, every church, is to aim at the simple end of preaching Christ — the Christ of the New Testament, in all his relations to the human race. And here permit me to indicate the three leading facts which should be exhibited in this connection.

1. Christ should be presented as a divine incarnation for the purpose of redemption. If there be any thing evident upon the very face of the New Testament, it is that the primitive believers received Christ as a divine Saviour. They hung their hopes for eternity upon no human redeemer, but with Thomas, each as he looked up with adoring faith, exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." With John they received the eternal Word, "who was made flesh and dwelt among us," as God

and one with the Father, even as "the true God and eternal life;" and with Paul, bowed before the mystery of the Godhead, "God manifest in the flesh;" and while they acknowledged, that as concerning the flesh Christ came of the Jews, yet broke out into the sublime declaration that he is "over all, God blessed for ever." Here we find the truth which gives meaning and value to every other revelation of the gospel; for it is not merely the instruction, the example, and the atoning death of Jesus, as a mere man, that arrests our attention and excites our hope, but the perception and knowledge of the fact that in these things there is a divine element and a manifestation of God. What man most needs to know, is the heart of God, that he may learn to love Him of whom he is now so distrustful, and to whom he is so bitterly opposed. It is the instinctive suggestion of depravity, that God is cold, unfeeling, selfish, arbitrary; intent upon securing his own supremacy whatever may become of his creatures, severe in his construction of law, and implacable toward his foes. And this delusion it was difficult to dispel, so long as God concealed himself in the mystery of his absolute divinity. He therefore came forth from his invisibility and apparent remoteness, to draw near in outward seeming to his fellow creatures; he assumed our very nature in its entirety, receiving it into a holy and mysterious union with deity; he descended from the heights of infinity, where faith itself could scarcely reach him, and stood before us on our own level; he assumed human duties, cares and labors, as well as human form, and here, in our own world and before our very eyes, by his divine obedience magnified his law which we had broken, unbosomed himself to our knowledge, and bade us mark his lowliness, his condescension, his purity, his tender compassion,

his self-sacrificing love, his matchless patience and forbearance. Ah, well did Paul know, that in a proper presentation of this sublime and heart-subduing fact, lay the power of the gospel, when he exclaimed, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants, for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is the central and vivifying fact of the gospel, that God has actually visited this guilty world on an errand of salvation, clothed in our nature; and that the divinely-appointed Mediator, Jesus Christ, Son of Man, and Son of God, was the infinite Jehovah incarnate, who thus bridged over the impassable gulf between the creature and Creator, that he might bring us nigh to Him and impart to us his divine life.

2. Christ should be preached, as furnishing by his life and death the sole ground of human justification before God. We are not to mistake the nature of the Saviour's mission as though it were simply a revelation of the mercy of God, a declaration that he was disposed to pardon, and would in fact graciously overlook human sins and frailties; nor are we to regard it as simply a moral influence exerted on human character to quicken and elevate it. It was an expedient of divine wisdom and love to sustain moral government in its integrity without the necessity of executing the penalty of the law. Hence Christ came into this world to suffer and to die, not as a criminal, not, in a strictly legal sense,

as under penalty even for others, but as answering in his sufferings vital and mortal, taken in their relation to God and man, the same substantial end as the original penalty — the whole *scheme* of his incarnation, life, and death being a substitute for the *pure law system*, in its power to conserve the general good of the universe and to manifest the glory of God, and being thus, relative to human punishment, vicarious. It was not incidental, but essential, that Christ should die; for his death of agony and shame, as the culmination of his work and sacrifice, was eminently the price of our salvation, the ransom paid, as it were, to Justice, for our deliverance from the power, pollution, and penalty of sin. Thus “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Hence, to preach the gospel, is to proclaim the remission of sin through the atoning death of Christ, to offer a free pardon for His sake to every sinner. It is to announce a plan of salvation at war with all dependence upon human merit, all attempts to propitiate God with the services and sufferings of those who have exposed themselves to his just anger as the Ruler of the Universe. It is to bear a message of hope to the despairing, bidding them trust in Christ and live, wash in his blood and be clean, clothe themselves with his righteousness and be justified, confide in his promise and receive eternal glory — all without money and without price to man, and without dishonor to God.

3. The gospel should be so explained and enforced as to present Christ as eminently a sanctifying power, requiring and producing holiness as the unalterable con-

dition of salvation. Salvation has comparatively but remote and indirect reference to hell. Its primary, immediate, and all-important reference is to sin. Man's ruin is not so much that he is doomed to suffering, as that he is whelmed in depravity, and, except for redemption through Christ, given over to moral degradation. Suffering follows necessarily in the train, and is also the wise expression of divine abhorrence of so vile a fall. Hence salvation is, emphatically, deliverance from sin, without which man were in no true sense saved, or possibly or wisely could be; and eternal life is simply the knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ as his revelation—that knowledge which consists in actual experience and direct perception, and is infinitely higher than mere belief. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the announcing-angel to his virgin-mother, "for he shall save his people from their sins." "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested," writes the beloved disciple, "that he might destroy the works of the devil." It was no part of the Saviour's mission to release men from moral obligation, but rather to make them love and thus fulfill their obligations. His own words were, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill," and he proceeds to warn men not to violate one of the least of God's commandments, nor to teach others to do so, under pain of exclusion from all the benefits of his kingdom. It was his grand design to confer purity as well as pardon, and to qualify the sinner spiritually as well as governmentally for heaven. The cross was to be the instrument of sanctification as well as justification, and therefore we read that noble record of Paul's interior life, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which

I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and "gave himself for me." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom (or by which) the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." And such an effect Peter also traces to the death of Christ, when he says, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." And if such be the power of his death, how much greater that of his life, for he now lives, our intercessor, our advocate, our present Redeemer, our indwelling Saviour, working in us by his Spirit all the graces of a holy character. In this respect we may regard him in the two-fold light of requiring and securing the holiness of his people. He is a prophet, we are told by Bible and Catechism, and as such reveals the divine will, that we may know the truth, conformity to which constitutes holiness. He is a king, likewise, and therefore has his law, which he calls upon all to obey. And then he is a Saviour, breaking the power of sin, fulfilling in us the promises of the new covenant, imparting strength to do right, and restoring the effaced divine image in the soul of man.

Hence, no man can truly present Christ or preach the gospel, who omits the requirements of the divine law, or fails to point out all that is implied in the command to "*repent*," or, in other words, to abandon all known sin, pledging the promise of Christ for the bestowment of the grace needed to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. We have no right to make Christ the minister of sin; nor do we fail in a proper exhibition of the gospel, if we occupy much time in rebuking the sins of men, and in insisting, with John, that "every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as

He is pure ; " that " He was manifested to take away our sins ; " that " whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not ; " that " in this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil ; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

Such being the nature of the gospel and the true idea of its proclamation, it only remains that we notice the methods by which it may be preached. These are as various as the means by which we may convey truth to the minds of our fellow-men. The most ordinary is found in a sanctified use of the intercourse of life, where conversation and example, ordered according to the Christian model and used to illustrate and recommend the true idea of piety by words and deeds, become most effective means of preaching Christ ; more powerful, indeed, than any other, and without which other methods fail of success. Then we have direct addresses in religious assemblies of a more or less public character, including the exhortation of the layman, and the sermon of the minister, as also in these latter days the printed page in boundless variety of form, in which a direct appeal is made to men to receive Christ as their salvation. Then we have the church, as a divine organization, to sustain the whole system of effort, with its united membership, its permanent officers, its avowed creed and covenant, its public ordinances, and its declared rules of admission, discipline, and fellowship. Here we find Christ's chosen means of propagating religion, for there can be no mightier combination of elements with which to instruct and impress men. Let a church be composed of true saints, its pastor and deacons men of God and zealous in their office, its confession of faith simple and scriptural, setting forth the essence of the gospel truth, its covenant clear, explicit and comprehen-

sive, its ordinances purely and devoutly celebrated by worthy participants, its terms of admission to membership as strict as Christ's requirement for discipleship, its standard of practice high and holy, its discipline of offenders prompt and thorough, and its fellowship with other churches and individual Christians discriminating and evangelical, and no array of instrumentalities can be so mighty to impress the world with gospel truth. Reverse this description, and in no other way can Christianity be more surely corrupted, or exert a more disastrous influence in the world by misrepresenting Christ and debasing the gospel.

Yet another means of preaching the gospel, is of somewhat modern invention, as regards the specific form, though not in its general spirit. I refer to those benevolent organizations not themselves ecclesiastical, though sometimes under ecclesiastical control, in which individuals and churches unite for the purpose of sending the gospel to the destitute both in our own land and abroad, to heathen, Mohammedans, nominal Christians, Jews and infidels, by ordained and lay missionaries, and through the circulation of the Bible and religious books, tracts, and papers. This mode of action is one of great and growing power, for three reasons: its field of operation is world-wide; its resources of men and money are exceedingly large, being the united contribution of numerous churches and even of many denominations; and its characteristic principles are the reflected sentiment of a vast body of professed Christians. With such advantages, the power of a benevolent society can scarcely be over-estimated; and therefore the basis of its operations and the policy of its procedure, can scarcely be too well guarded. Its claim is to preach the gospel; and according to the fidelity with which it performs its promise, will be its

influence for good ; while any deflection from the line of Christian principle, any corruption of Christian doctrine, any misrepresentation of Christ, theoretically or practically, will spread decay and death by a two-fold process—of direct action on the world, and reaction on the churches and individuals who sustain the society, and who will necessarily imbibe its spirit and imitate its example. And these remarks are peculiarly true of a missionary society; because, through the sympathy and aid which it secures, the ministry which it supports and directs, and the churches which it organizes and sustains, it is wielding the mightiest instrumentalities for creating public sentiment and controlling questions of morals and religion, both at home and abroad. If, after the example of Paul and Barnabas, it preach the gospel in its strictness of requirement and its fullness of grace, it will be a fountain of blessing to present and future generations ; while a failure to understand or apply the gospel in any of its relations to the individual or the community, will sow error and nourish sin in the fertile soil of human depravity. But I must hasten to present a few concluding remarks suggested by this subject.

1. No system of legality can claim to be the gospel. Legality exists wherever human action, as supposed to meet divine requirement, is substituted for the work of Christ, so that man becomes in any measure his own Saviour. It may pertain to justification, as when a man relies upon anything which he is, or has been, or expects to be, as the ground of his acceptance with God, taking complacence in his own deeds or sufferings, and placing dependence upon them as in any wise a propitiation for sin. Or, legality may pertain to sanctification, as when a man attempts to be holy under merely legal motives of personal interest and by dint of will-work constrained by

fear or goaded by an upbraiding conscience, and relying on resolutions, fasts, covenants, or anything beside simple faith in Jesus. Men are slow to learn that Christ is the substance of the gospel, Christ as a personal, living, sympathizing, all-sufficient, divine, indwelling Saviour, delivering equally from the condemnation and pollution of sin ; who has brought our nature into union with the Godhead, that we may be elevated, purified, and, as Peter declares, "made partakers of the divine nature." Rules of morality, laws for the conscience, whether expanded into the sixty-six books of the Bible, or condensed into the decalogue, can never convert and save the sinner. He must be invited to wash in the blood of Christ, and receive the Saviour as an indwelling power.

2. No system of antinomianism should be recognized as the gospel. Many rush from the extreme of legality to that of antinomianism, and it is difficult to decide which is the more fatal to man, or dishonorable to God. The one generates bondage, and the other lawlessness. The one prevents holiness, by cherishing the form and omitting its essential spirit of love and liberty ; and the other destroys it by dispensing with the form and corrupting unto death the spirit. I apply the term antinomian to whatever operates theoretically or practically to relax the claims of the divine law, or obviate in any particular the necessity of holiness. While the gross theories of antinomianism which have sometimes prevailed, are now rarely mentioned among evangelical Christians, many mournful signs indicate the practical working of the error. Such a sign is the low standard of holiness adopted in the churches, and the prevalent disposition to rely on Christ rather as an atoning than as a sanctifying Saviour. Many things conspire to prove that he is used simply as a sponge to wipe out guilt as it accumulates, it being found convenient to have

a justification prepared for us in every sense aside from holy action of our own. It is thought satisfactory if we only *confess sin enough*, and declare in conclusion that we rest entirely upon the *merits of the Saviour*—salvation being evidently supposed to consist in being saved from wrath instead of from sin. Another sign, is the promptitude with which discipline is inflicted for errors of opinion, and the slowness with which it overtakes immoralities of practice ; so that while a heretic is usually cast out of the synagogue amid universal execration, and with summary process, a member of loose, worldly, and inconsistent life may remain in communion till death excinds him from the visible church. Still another indication of antinomianism is a reliance upon religious fervors and devotional exercises as evidence of piety, instead of a practical manifestation of self-crucifixion and of love to God and man. It is probably in this way that missionaries and pastors at home are able to speak of persons who are involved in great social sins, such as slaveholding, as giving evidence “*in other respects*” of being converted, and as therefore proper subjects for admission to the church — the grand, practical test of John, “He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?” being set aside, and certain technical experiences of conviction, sorrow, faith, and joy, substituted in the place.

But perhaps no more certain or frequent sign of the error in question is found, than the current declaration of many ministers and church-members, that to attack specific sins, directly and avowedly, is not to preach the gospel. It is evident that such use the word gospel in other than a New Testament sense. They censure ministers for preaching against prevailing iniquities, and express the wish that they would confine themselves to the gospel and not wander off to such topics as slavery, intemperance, and other

popular sins. Now, how plain it is, that they mean by the gospel certain abstract doctrines concerning atonement and justification, with a few general ethical maxims like the golden rule, to be discussed vaguely and without definite application to the sins of the times and of the hearers. But to what mind does the golden rule need a defence in the abstract; or why should the ministry be instituted to preach admitted abstractions? It is concrete truth that men need, and that ministers must preach. Is God so unwise, as to insist on the barren presentation of truth that is not denied, and dispense with the assertion and enforcement of it in the form in which men by their sin disown and repudiate it? But in that case, how poorly Christ himself understood how to preach the gospel; for where he discoursed once on the doctrines referred to, he inveighed a hundred times against the iniquities which were practiced in the land. But what do such theorists mean by the gospel? Do they imagine that Christ repealed the decalogue, or commanded his ministers not to explain and enforce it? Do they believe that even Christ can save men in sin? Do they admit that repentance is part of the gospel, and holiness is a condition of salvation? But what is repentance, but the abandonment of sin? and how shall men be brought to this, except as their sins are pointed out after the manner of the ancient prophets, of the Saviour, and of the apostles? Surely if men "love darkness better than light because their deeds are evil," they will not make application of general principles for themselves, but must have a minister who will dissect the sin and reveal its nature, and the sinner and show his wickedness, saying as did the prophet to the king, "Thou art the man!" How vain then is the plea, that popular and legalized sins must be let alone, and not named, and that the minister must confine himself to general topics and

principles of the gospel, leaving these to gradually undermine wicked practices and immoral institutions. So did not Nathan deal with David, nor Elijah with Ahab, nor John the Baptist with Herod, nor Christ with the Pharisees, nor the apostles with any class of sinners. In olden time "the gospel came not in word only but in power." It convicted a sinner of his individual transgressions, and summoned him to repentance on pain of God's eternal wrath. It thundered in his ears the curses of the law, and made him understand that Christ included the law in the gospel, and that if he was ever to be saved, he must learn to love his duty. The wicked always love the abstract gospel, and hate that which wars upon their sin. A rumseller once protested in my hearing, that he loved to hear ministers preach the gospel, but was grieved when they turned aside to denounce the liquor traffic—as though Christ and the sale of rum were not necessarily antagonistic ideas and forces! And as to the "sapping and mining" policy, which insists that the general doctrines and principles of the gospel are to be preached, and left to work out their own application and gradually undermine social evils, do not men of sense perceive, that at last the scattered rays of light must be brought to a focus, that some one must see the application of the gospel and teach it to others, till a sufficient number are enlightened to control public opinion? This has always been the way in which the gospel has eradicated evils. Abstract principles, unapplied, never have abolished, and never could abolish, any wrong practice. But while such sophistry may be expected from criminals, why should it be introduced into sermons, and missionary reports, and editorials in religious newspapers? Its use shows how insidiously the latent error of antinomianism creeps into the church,

until the defence and application of God's law to human conduct is supposed to be inconsistent with preaching the gospel ! while the true idea of it is imagined to be, the offer of Christ as a Saviour without any specification of the sins from which he is to save us ! Let us never give in our adhesion to such an abrogation of the divine law. The gospel is never truly preached, unless Christ is presented as the utter antagonism of every form of sin, and as having no concord with Belial. The religion of Christ is no play of the imagination, nor conclusion of logic, nor devotional sentiment, nor exercise of complacence, nor movement of feeling, merely, nor these alone combined, but is the death of self and the life of love.

3. Every legitimate development and application of a gospel principle, is as truly the gospel as the original principle. You are not to deny the substantial unity of seed and plant, of tree and fruit, of youth and age : they may be distinguished but not separated. The latter is only the completion of the former, the end for which it exists. Take for instance the golden rule : to proclaim and enforce the principle, that our treatment of others should be regulated by the treatment we should desire and justly expect from them in the same circumstances, is certainly to preach the gospel, for this is Christ's own requirement. But why was this rule given, except that it might be applied in every possible relation, in every specific case ? The Bible reveals the principle, and leaves its application to us : but when that application is perceived in a specific case, though it be eighteen hundred years after the announcement of the principle, it is as much the gospel, and to be preached as such, as the original rule which was the seed-thought. It has often been stated, that the Bible legislates by principles and not by an enumeration of particulars, which

latter are too numerous for citation and vary with every generation, country, and individual. It is therefore no disparagement of inspired men, nor of primitive laborers, to assert that they probably did not themselves see the application of gospel principles, even of so simple a rule as the one referred to, in relation to many practices which existed in their day and have survived to our own. They fearlessly applied the gospel so far as their light permitted; and if in the progress of time and of human experience, and in the altered relations of Christianity to the world, new applications and enforcements have become manifest, it is our duty to make them upon the authority of God and as part of the gospel. The fruit is as truly divine as the first germ. In this sense the gospel is continually enlarging, and God is revealing his will by additional disclosures; not by ancient inspiration, but by the quick perception of sanctified sensibility and the vigorous logic of holy minds who are led by the Spirit and Providence of God to new and more complete applications of old principles. It is in this way that a multitude of practices have been discovered to be contrary to the gospel, which are not specifically condemned on the pages of the Bible, though they were practiced in the time of the apostles, and may even have been tolerated to some extent in the primitive church. There is every reason to believe that the gospel will be preached more strictly in its particulars, and the church rise to a correspondingly higher standard of life, at a future age, than under the apostles themselves. The world, and the church, and the ministry, have by no means discovered as yet all that the gospel contains, and there is a fullness of implication in the duty of preaching the gospel, which will increasingly reveal itself in the progress of religion on earth.

And now, brethren, you will permit me to conclude by congratulating you, that these are the principles upon which your Society is based, and by which your missionary efforts are regulated. You aim to preach the gospel in its fullness, to exhibit Christ as the antagonist of sin and the sanctifier of his people. Believing that certain older and more popular societies have adopted a policy characterized by worldly temporizing rather than Christian simplicity, and failing to convince them of their error, and knowing that truth is more valuable than outward uniformity, and righteousness more to be regarded than human organizations, you have associated on a better platform, to carry the gospel to the destitute. Your motto is, "No compromise with known sin, nor fellowship with those who practice it." If sin has in any form and locality become popular and respectable, if its practisers are distinguished and wealthy, while its victims are poor and despised, if the sanctions of law are thrown around it, if long usage has hallowed its iniquities, and the practice of professed Christians has been taken as a guarantee of its right, precisely then and there you feel called to utter your loudest and most distinct protest, and to make the most fearless application of the gospel. Nor does this position imply that wisdom and prudence are discarded, and a headlong assault made upon the prejudices and passions of a community ; it only requires that the truth shall at a suitable time be unequivocally announced by the preacher, that conformity of life with it shall be required as evidence of repentance and faith in the convert, and that ecclesiastical fellowship and discipline shall be such as to make the church practically antagonistic to all overt sin. It is necessary to the glory of God and the good of man, that the gospel be arrayed openly against all popular, social and organic sins, that they may be overthrown as fast as

religion advances; and he who so preaches the gospel as to tolerate and even strengthen systems of sin, does more injury to religion, and brings greater discredit on the Bible, than blasphemers and infidels. To illustrate my meaning, take the case of slavery, which nearly all acknowledge to be an unnatural and vicious institution, and destined to pass away before increasing civilization and Christianity. It has existed in this country two centuries, side by side with churches, Bibles, ministers, and missionary societies ; and yet amid so much professed preaching of the gospel for so long a time, it has constantly increased in strength, and has multiplied its victims from a few thousand to over three millions, while professors of religion are as generally involved in the sin as any other class. What kind of a gospel is it, which makes progress backward at so fearful a rate ? How long shall we rely on such preaching to abolish slavery ? What right, indeed, have the preachers of so powerless a gospel to claim that they are the ministers of Him who said, " The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Or with what propriety can they point for a justification to the example of Paul ? who said to the slaveholders of his day, " Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal," or in the more forcible language of the original, " Masters, give unto your slaves justice and equality." True, the apostle may not have condemned and interdicted the mere legal relation, which, then as now, was often above the master's reach, but he struck at the *thing itself*, apart from all technical names by which it might be known in law or otherwise, and required its renunciation—which is the precise policy for which we contend. And such

specific application of ethical and Scriptural principles, by which the claim and usage of oppression was to be repudiated as unchristian, Paul considered to be *preaching the gospel*. He had no fear that the doctrine of atonement, and least of all, that of total depravity on the one hand or of regeneration on the other, would suffer, because he paused to require that his converts, if slaveholders, should give evidence of piety by conceding to their slaves justice and equality. He believed that the use of truth is to produce holiness, and that doctrines are given not so much to furnish subjects for speculation, as reasons for obedience. He would have repudiated with sorrow and indignation, a professed gospel, which, under a preaching of two hundred years, could allow such a system as American slavery to grow from a feeble infancy to its present gigantic stature ; and which, even at this late date and after such an experiment, denies the propriety of direct attack, and talks of confining the minister to the general principles of morality, with the hope of gradually undermining the system ! What ! he would cry, could he revisit earth and stand among us, Is this vague, impotent presentation of creeds, catechisms, and abstract ethics, so powerless to rectify public opinion, to shape legislation, or even to sanctify individual christian conduct ; which, so far from reforming the world, can not even keep the church pure from one of the vilest of sins ; is this to be called “preaching the gospel,”—the blessed gospel, which is the antagonism of every sin, and which the Holy Spirit bade me declare to be “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds ?” If we admit that the gospel has been truly and fully preached at the South, how shall we defend its claim to a divine origin or to a perfect adaptation to human wants ? Has it been a leaven of love to leaven the whole lump ? Has it been salt to preserve the social mass from the

putrescence of sin ? Has it proved itself to be "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation"—a salvation present and visible, individual and social ? What has it done for the slave at the South, with talent, and rank, and wealth to aid it, and two centuries in which to work ? Alas ! these questions necessitate answers of shame ; answers which must imply either that the gospel is inherently weak, or else that the southern church and ministry have not faithfully preached and applied it. And shall we hesitate which alternative to choose ? Can our southern brethren blame us, if we prefer to suspect their fidelity rather than to accuse the gospel of a lack of power ?

My brethren, you have seen this disastrous experiment tried with appalling results to the slave, to the church of Christ, and to the interests of our country and the world ; and you properly insist on a new policy, which is, indeed, not so much new, as a return to the old apostolic plan. You protest against a farther multiplication of slave-holding converts and churches. If politicians can not be induced to restrict the slave system by the unhesitating application of the Wilmot Proviso to all new states and territories, you demand that there shall be at least one spot exclusive of it—the church of Christ ; so that Liberty shall be the handmaid of Christianity, if not of Republicanism. Though it be painful to violate time-honored associations, and to abandon benevolent organizations instituted by our fathers, in order to secure a sound and Christian policy, yet it were more painful to sacrifice the honor of Christ and to attach disgrace to the gospel. Let us remember, also, that we are ourselves to be fathers to the coming generation of the church, and that it becomes us not to be so intoxicated with the wine of pride or popularity, as to give occasion to our children to walk backward with

averted gaze, bearing some garment of charity with which to cover our nakedness.

Brethren, persevere in your endeavor to rescue the gospel from antinomian perversions. You are following in the steps of the apostle James, who eighteen centuries ago fought the battle of living works against a dead faith, especially as connected with the treatment of the poor in the church of Christ. May God enable you to send out a multitude of faithful ministers, who shall indeed "preach the gospel," even "the truth as it is in Jesus," a gospel of love, of peace, of freedom, of purity, of opposition to all sin; and may the Holy Spirit through their agency organize churches, which by a holy covenant, a Scriptural creed, a strict discipline, and a consistent life, shall yet more powerfully "preach the gospel" to an awe-struck and convicted world.

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